

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)	
)	
Implementation of the DTV Delay Act)	MB Docket No. 09-17
)	
DTV Consumer Education Initiative)	MB Docket 07-148
)	
Third Periodic Review of the Commission's Rules)	
And Policies Affecting the Conversion to)	MB Docket No. 07-97
Digital Television)	
)	
Implementation of Short-term Analog Flash and)	
Emergency Readiness Act, Establishment of DTV)	MB Docket No. 08-255
Transition "Analog Nightlight" Program)	

COMMENTS

Sunbelt-South Telecommunications, Ltd., ("Sunbelt") licensee of Television Station WSST, Cordele, Georgia, by its counsel, respectfully submits its Comments in response to the Commission's *Second Report & Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, FCC 09-11, released February 20, 2009 ("2nd R&O"). The 2nd R&O set forth proposed procedures for television stations wanting to terminate analog operations prior to the newly established transition date of June 12, 2009. It encouraged such stations to submit comments identifying their preferred date for early analog termination and the reasons why the station wanted to terminate analog operation in advance of the new transition date of June 12, 2009.

1. WSST is in the Albany GA DMA, but it does not have a major network affiliation.¹ Sunbelt has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to complete construction of WSST's digital facility on time. This placed a tremendous financial

¹ Sunbelt is using the same definition of "major network" as the Commission used in footnote 105 of the 2nd R&O, namely ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox.

strain on an independent station serving a very small market within its DMA. The current economic situation is not helping either, as revenue at the station has taken a tremendous hit in the last twelve months as well. Continuing to operate both an analog and digital signal is very costly to the station. **For these reasons, WSST would like to permanently cease analog operations on April 16, 2009.**

2. As soon as the FCC adopts appropriate procedures, Sunbelt will file the necessary notification of its intent to terminate analog operation on that date. Sunbelt selected April 16, 2009, because that is the date 30 days from March 17, 2009, which is the date the FCC has determined that stations must file notice of their intent to terminate analog operations early. It will afford WSST one final 30 day period in which to notify its viewers of the impending termination of analog operations.

3. Sunbelt has already conducted several “tests” where WSST’s analog signal was shut down for between 3 to 5 minutes and not a single telephone call was received at the station. In addition, a recent equipment malfunction caused the analog signal to be down for approximately one hour and again, not a single phone call was received at the station. Sunbelt attributes this to the fact to the consumer education initiatives it did and the fact that all of the cable systems in the area carry the WSST signal and made the digital conversion long ago. Also, Sunbelt has inspected the local stores in its market and has found no shortage of the converter boxes for those who might need them. WSST has assisted the few people who called with problems on a one-on-one basis in getting their equipment adjusted to receive the digital signal, and will continue to do so with WSST’s viewers even after the transition.

4. Allowing WSST to transition on April 16, 2009, will enable Sunbelt to redirect funds from utility and other necessary expenses to maintain analog operations to personnel expenses. The utility cost savings alone may make the difference between whether or not Sunbelt will be able to keep people on its payroll. WSST has a tremendous history of community involvement and public affairs programming. It creates hundreds and hundreds of hours of locally produced programming each year including live coverage of high school sporting events, and complete political coverage of local elections, including as an example a candidate's forum tonight! Sunbelt is certain the FCC will agree that Sunbelt's funds are better spent on insuring the production and delivery of quality local programming rather than on utility bills to run a duplicative analog signal.

5. Finally, the early analog termination will allow WSST to move its digital antenna to the top of its broadcast tower which will improve its digital coverage. Right now the analog antenna is at the top of the tower and Sunbelt saw no sense in switching the two antennas early, and then climbing back up to remove the analog antenna later following the analog signal termination. Once analog operation is terminated, Sunbelt can remove the analog antenna and move the digital antenna to the top of the tower in one operation.

6. Through its campaign of public awareness, Sunbelt has advised the public that analog operations would be coming to an end. Tests have been run at different times and there have been no phone calls to the station from viewers about what had happened to the WSST signal. Sunbelt is prepared to run a final 30 day public information campaign starting on March 17, 2009, to advise its viewers that it will terminate analog

operations on April 16, 2009. Sunbelt believes that a 30 day notification period at this stage is sufficient to make viewers in its area aware of the final date for the termination of analog operations. WSST will also run a crawl announcing the analog termination date for the seven days prior to April 16, 2009, should the FCC so order.

7. Sunbelt has done all it can to make its viewers aware of the conversion, and if the tests it has conducted at WSST are any indication, the final termination of its analog operations on April 16, 2009, should be uneventful. For these reasons, Sunbelt hopes the FCC will adopt rules that will allow WSST to terminate analog operations on April 16, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,
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